

Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 7 was canceled.

Claims 32 and 33 were added.

Claims 1, 8, 10-14, 18, 19, 24-29 were amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for handling coupons, comprising:

redeeming at a first location a plurality of input coupons including at least first and second input coupons during a first time interval using a main computer system including a first coupon input device;

transporting to a second location a plurality of verifying coupons to an auxiliary computer system including an auxiliary coupon input device, said verifying coupons being the same as said input coupons when said redeeming step is properly conducted, said transporting step being conducted within five days of said redeeming step;

making a determination related to whether said redeeming step was properly conducted using said auxiliary computer system and said plurality of verifying coupons, said making a determination step including comparing input coupon information associated with said plurality of input coupons with verifying coupon information associated with said plurality of verifying coupons, wherein at least said verifying coupon information is input to said auxiliary coupon input device, said making a determination step further including determining whether a match exists between said verifying coupon information and a number of products identified when said plurality of input coupons were redeemed; [and]

generating non-match information related to at least one non-match between said input coupon information and said verifying coupon information; and

reimbursing for at least some of said plurality of input coupons, said reimbursing step being conducted within five days of said making step.

8. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim [7]1, wherein:

when said [determining] comparing step determines that a match does not exist between each of said verifying coupon information associated with said plurality of verifying coupons and said number of products, ascertaining whether reimbursement is to be provided for each of said plurality of verifying coupons that is non-matched.

10. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 1, wherein:

said making a determination step includes determining whether a match exists [related to] involving said input coupon information associated with said plurality of coupons using additional coupon information from said main computer system [related to] associated with additional coupons that were redeemed and which are different from said plurality of input coupons, said additional coupons being redeemed after said first time interval.

11. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 10, further including:

maintaining in storage memory said additional coupon information [related to] associated with said additional coupons and using said additional coupon information [related to said additional coupons] when utilizing a second plurality of input coupons.

12. A method, as claimed in Claim [7]1, further including:

generating [first] match information related to a match between said input coupon information associated with said plurality of input coupons and said verifying coupon information associated with said plurality of verifying coupons [and generating second information related to a non-match between said plurality of input coupons and said plurality of verifying coupons].

13. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim [8]1, further including:

generating [third] reimbursing information related to reimbursing for at least one of said verifying coupons for which there is no match with said input coupon information associated with said plurality of input coupons.

14. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim [8]1, further including:

generating [fourth] non-reimbursement information related to at least one of said verifying coupons for which there was no match with said input coupon information associated with said plurality of input coupons and for which no reimbursement was made.

18. (Amended) A system involved with handling coupons, comprising:

a main computer subsystem including a coupon information input device located at a first location that provides input coupon information from a first plurality of input coupons, said input coupon information including identification information related to identifying said first plurality of input coupons and product information related to products purchased, said main computer subsystem also including a communications interface, at least one processor and a storage that stores said identification information and said product information, said communications interface communicating with said at least one processor and said at least one processor communicating with said storage, wherein said identification information and said product information can be downloaded using said communications interface; and

an auxiliary computer subsystem that receives said input coupon information from said main computer subsystem, said auxiliary computer subsystem including an auxiliary coupon information input device located at a second location and at least a first processor, said auxiliary coupon information input device receiving a first plurality of verifying coupons related to determining whether correspondence exists with said first plurality of input coupons, said first processor used in determining whether a match exists between said first plurality of input coupons and said first plurality of verifying coupons, said auxiliary coupon information input device inputting coupon information to said auxiliary computer subsystem during a time different from said auxiliary computer subsystem receiving said input coupon information from said main computer subsystem.

19. (Amended) A system, as claimed in Claim 18, wherein:

[said auxiliary computer subsystem is in communication with said main computer subsystem and receives said input coupon information from said main computer subsystem,]

5 said auxiliary computer subsystem also receiv[ing]es additional coupon information related to additional coupons different from said first plurality of input coupons, said first processor taking into account said additional coupon information when determining whether a match exists between said first plurality of input coupons and said first plurality of verifying coupons.

24. (Amended) A method involving the handling of coupons, comprising:

5 providing a main computer subsystem at a facility of a retailer and an auxiliary computer subsystem in communication with said main computer subsystem, said main computer subsystem including at least a first coupon information input device and said auxiliary computer subsystem including at least an auxiliary coupon information input device;

inputting during a first time interval a first plurality of input coupons for redemption from at least a first customer using said first coupon information input device, each of said first plurality of input coupons including input coupon information;

10 inputting during said first time interval a first plurality of product information related to products being purchased;

redeeming at least one of said first plurality of coupons for the first customer using said input coupon information and said first plurality of product information;

15 communicating said input coupon information related to at least said first plurality of input coupons to said auxiliary computer subsystem using said main computer subsystem;

communicating said first plurality of product information to said auxiliary computer subsystem using said main computer subsystem;

20 transporting a first plurality of verifying coupons to said auxiliary computer subsystem, each of said first plurality of verifying coupons including verifying coupon information and said first plurality of verifying coupons to be used in determining whether said first plurality of verifying coupons correspond to said first plurality of input coupons in kind and number;

[reading] inputting said verifying coupon information associated with said first plurality of verifying coupons using said auxiliary coupon input information device;

25 determining whether there is correspondence between each of said verifying coupon information associated with said first plurality of verifying coupons and at least one of said input coupon information associated with said first plurality of input coupons [using said input coupon information]; [and]

30 ascertaining whether there is correspondence between each of said verifying coupon information of said first plurality of verifying coupons and at least one of said product information using said auxiliary computer subsystem; and

reimbursing the retailer for at least some of said first plurality of input coupons.

25. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 24, further including:

withholding reimbursement to the retailer for at least one of said first plurality of input coupons when said determining step[s] determines that there is no correspondence between said at least one input coupon [of] information associated with said first plurality of input coupons and said first verifying coupon information associated with said first plurality of verifying coupons.

26. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 24, wherein:

5 said step of communicating [step] said input coupon information includes communicating additional coupon information related to additional coupons different from said first plurality of input coupons before completing said determining step and in which said determining step does not rely on said additional coupon information when determining whether each of said verifying coupon information associated with said first plurality of verifying coupons corresponds to said at least one of said input coupon information associated with said first plurality of input coupons.

27. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 24, wherein:

said auxiliary computer subsystem is located at the facility of the retailer and said reimbursing step includes printing a check made out to the retailer or providing an electronic fund transfer to the retailer within five days of [conducting] completing all said inputting steps.

28. A method, as claimed in Claim 24, [wherein] further including:

shipping said first plurality of input coupons to at least one agent of manufacturers or a manufacturer associated with said first plurality of input coupons under the responsibility of a party independent of the retailer and without clearing said first plurality
5 of input coupons by a coupon clearinghouse.

29. (Amended) A method, as claimed in Claim 24, wherein:

when said [determining] ascertaining step [determines] ascertains that no correspondence exists involving said products purchased during said time interval and said
5 verifying coupon information associated with said plurality of verifying coupons, [ascertaining] deciding whether reimbursement is to be provided to the retailer.